

Articles

DISCOVERING ADULT EDUCATION AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA¹

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Abstract

In the early 1920s, McGill University and the University of British Columbia (UBC) were engaged in a traditional form of university extension: the delivery of evening lectures by university faculty members to people not enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students. By 1935, each university had discovered the broader terrain of adult education and declared itself to be a provider of a range of educational programs and services for working adults. At McGill, adult education was established as an institutional priority in 1928 and largely disappeared by the early 1940s. At UBC, adult education was discovered in 1935 and was sustained as a prominent institutional priority until the 1960s. This article narrates the discovery and establishment of adult education at two of Canada's most prestigious universities, and explores what this narrative means for our understanding of the role of universities in Canadian adult education.

Résumé

Tôt dans les années 1920s, McGill University et l'University of British Columbia s'engageaient dans une forme traditionnelle de l'extension universitaire : les conférences de soir données par les membres de faculté aux gens qui ne furent pas inscrits comme étudiants réguliers. Avant 1935, chaque université a découvert le terrain plus divers de l'éducation des adultes, et s'est déclaré fournisseur d'une gamme des programmes et services éducatives pour les adultes. À McGill, l'éducation des adultes a été établie comme priorité institutionnelle en 1928, mais cette priorité a plus ou moins disparu à partir des années 1940s. À UBC, l'éducation des adultes a été découvert en 1935, et a été soutenue comme priorité institutionnelle jusqu'aux années 1960s. Cette article raconte la découverte et l'établissement de l'éducation des adultes à deux des plus prestigieuses universités

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Canadiens, et explore ce que cet narratif veut dire pour notre compréhension du rôle des universités dans l'éducation des adultes au Canada.

Introduction

Today, Canadian universities are engaged in a broad variety of adult educational activities. Older students comprise an increasingly significant proportion of undergraduate and graduate populations at many institutions, and some universities have structured programs so that degrees may be completed on a part-time basis by working adults. Most universities in Canada have a continuing education or extension unit responsible for activities such as non-credit courses, certificate programs, customized training, public lectures, distance education programs, and degree-credit classes offered in the evenings, on Saturdays, during spring and summer months, or off-campus. A few universities have academic programs dedicated to the scholarship of adult education, while others employ faculty members in various educational and social scientific departments who conduct research pertinent to the field and its practitioners.

Adult education has a lengthy heritage at Canadian universities. Well-known historical examples of university-based adult education initiatives include the extension programs of St. Francis Xavier University (Alexander, 1997; Delaney, 1985; Welton, 2001), the University of Alberta (Clark, 1985; Corbett, 1957; Cormack, 1981; McLean, 2007b), and the University of Saskatchewan (McLean, 2007a; Paul, 1979; Welton, 2003). Existing literature also includes histories of adult educational activities at various other Canadian universities (Corbett, 1952; Kidd, 1956; McLean, 2008; G. Selman, 1966, 1988, 1994; G. Selman, Cooke, M. Selman, & Dampier, 1998). Such literature provides a thorough description of what Canadian universities have contributed to the domain of adult education, but it falls short of explaining why universities have engaged in adult education and why such engagement has varied so considerably over time.

I have previously argued (McLean, 2007a) that there are two predominant frameworks for interpreting the history of university extension and continuing education in Canada. First, the liberal, or institutional, perspective argues that universities have adopted forms of adult educational practice that best serve individuals and communities at different times and places. From the institutions' perspective, adult education activities have been means for universities to disseminate resources, foster progress in society, and meet the learning needs of individuals (McLean, 2008). This perspective has been reinforced by various public policy documents, including Delors et al., 1996; European Commission, 2001; Human Resources Development Canada, 2002; and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996. Second, the critical, or nostalgic, perspective argues that universities historically adopted forms of adult education oriented toward social justice, but that they have more recently adopted forms of adult education oriented toward revenue generation and the marketplace. From this perspective, adult education activities were once means through which members of universities assisted individuals and communities to resist dominant forms of power relations. Such activities are seen to have changed fundamentally in recent decades, with neo-conservative government policies and shifting patterns of institutional leadership causing universities to become complicit with

those forms of power they had previously resisted (Cram & Morrison, 2005; Haughey, 1998, 2006; M. Selman, 2005).

In recent work focused on the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan (McLean, 2007a, 2007b), I have argued that neither the institutional nor the nostalgic perspective provide an adequate theoretical framework for understanding the history of Canadian universities' involvement with adult education. Rather, I have argued that political-economic change has been the primary explanatory force behind the emergence and evolution of university extension and continuing education. In short, my previous research shows that the emergence of university extension in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the 1910s and 1920s reflected the effort of the state to support mercantilist production in which independent commodity producers (i.e., farmers) secured a livelihood by producing goods (i.e., wheat and beef) for the marketplace. The replacement of university extension by continuing education in the 1960s and 1970s reflected the effort of the state to support capitalist production in which wage labourers secured a livelihood by selling their labour to others. While the form of universities' adult education work has shifted substantially, the political-economic roots and impact of such work have remained consistent.

This article contributes to the historical literature on adult education in Canada through narrating the discovery and establishment of adult education at McGill University and the University of British Columbia (UBC). McGill is one of the oldest universities in Canada, having been established in 1821. UBC was officially established in 1908, but did not deliver its first classes until 1915. McGill and UBC were selected as the focus of this research because their political-economic contexts were distinct from those I had previously studied in my analysis of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Since my political-economic theory claims that the evolution of capitalism has a decisive influence on the emergence and evolution of adult education work at universities, this article has an empirical focus on universities situated in cities where capitalist relations of production have long been predominant.

McGill and UBC share a fascinating pattern of engagement with the education of adults. In the early 1920s, both universities offered a significant number of extension lectures to members of the public in their respective metropolitan areas, but were not otherwise extensively involved in the education of adults who were not enrolled as full-time undergraduate or graduate students. By the mid-1930s, both universities had established organizational units dedicated to adult education and declared themselves to be providers of a broad range of adult educational services for working adults. By the 1940s at McGill and by the 1960s at UBC, both universities had significantly reduced the range and scope of their adult educational activities. By 1970, both universities had transformed their extension departments into centres of continuing education and had decreased their involvement with general adult education in favour of an increased provision of continuing professional education to adults already possessing higher levels of formal education.

This article narrates an interesting chapter in the history of adult education in Canada. It describes the extension activities of McGill and UBC in the era prior to the establishment of adult education as a distinct field of education. It then documents the discovery of adult education by the two universities and outlines the establishment of adult educational programming in the years following that discovery. The article is based entirely

upon data gathered from the two universities' archives. Specific sources are noted either through citing a report in the list of references to this article, or through noting the location of archival materials in the text of the article itself. By sketching the emergence of adult education as an institutional priority at McGill and UBC, this article provokes reflection about the role of universities in adult education in Canada.

Point of Departure: Extension Lectures

University extension at McGill and UBC was initially similar to work initiated in the 1870s at Cambridge, Oxford, and the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching (Burrows, 1976; Jepson, 1973). Such extension work typically involved the delivery of lectures by university professors at off-campus locations or on-campus in the evenings. The lectures were sometimes stand-alone forms of education and entertainment, and they were sometimes accompanied by examinations that could lead to degree-credit for students successfully completing those examinations. The first reference to university extension in the annual reports of McGill University occurred in 1891:

The subject of University Extension, as it has been called, has recently received great attention in Great Britain and the United States, and has been brought under the notice of universities in Canada by a circular from the Minister of Public Instruction, Ontario, inviting representatives to a conference in Toronto for the purpose of forming, if possible, a Dominion Association for the promotion of the object . . .

The movement as now carried on in the mother country is intended to afford some portion of the benefits of University education to those who cannot take advantage of the regular courses of instruction, and the method of operation is that the Universities provide Lecturers and Examiners, while the people in the places in which the lectures are delivered contribute the means of defraying the expense. (McGill University, 1891, p. 11)

Leaders of McGill University joined counterparts at Queen's University and the University of Toronto to form the Canadian Association for the Extension of University Teaching in 1891 (Corbett, 1950; Kidd, 1956). However, this association does not seem to have lasted more than a year or two, and after 1894, 25 years passed before the annual report of McGill University contained another direct reference to university extension.

While McGill faculty members sometimes delivered public lectures in Montreal throughout the latter half of the 1800s, the first sustained institutional commitment to extension work at McGill came with the creation of an extension committee in 1920. Within a few years, this committee became known as the Committee on Extension Courses and University Lectures. In its annual report for 1925–26, the committee described three activities under its auspices:

1. Courses of an academic nature, many of which are exactly similar to those given to undergraduates and lead to an examination qualifying the successful candidate for a credit.

2. Group Courses, i.e., courses designed especially for members of a certain profession or interested in certain industrial activities.
3. Lyceum Courses, i.e., series of lectures on general topics not leading to any credit. With these may be grouped the special lectures given by noted visitors to the University and by members of the University staff in other places. (McGill University, 1926, p. 165)

The number of academic extension courses delivered increased from 13 in 1921–22 to 20 in 1922–23 and 24 in 1925–26. In 1922–23, extension courses were offered in the following subjects: botany, Canadian history, commercial law, electrical engineering, English literature, French literature, accountancy, metallography, political economy, psychology, social science, social problems, gothic art, export trade, and home economics (McGill University, 1923). Extension courses involved a regular series of evening lectures, and in many cases were accompanied by a final examination that students could elect to write. If successful on the examination, students would receive academic credit for the course.

In the early 1920s, McGill's extension committee organized specialized extension courses for people working in the fields of insurance, social work, and urban planning. In such work, McGill adopted the principle that

no attempt will be made to teach the technique of the business in which the students are engaged. It is felt that such work can be done far better by the institutions where they are serving. There is, however, no doubt that a service can be rendered in giving a considerable amount of information regarding, and guidance in, the study of other subjects which are of importance to them in the practice of their profession. (McGill University, 1924, pp. 32–33)

As an example, in its work with insurance agents, McGill's extension courses focused on economics, accounting, English, and psychology.

Public lectures by faculty members of McGill, and sometimes by visiting professors, were also delivered on subjects of general popular interest. In the early 1920s, these were sometimes known as Lyceum lectures. In 1925–26, such lectures included those with the following titles: Evolution; The Family Wage; Wastefulness in National Expenditure; The Bible as Literature; Grumps and Glands, the Postal System of the Human Body; Art and Modern Life; Music and Education; Sport in the Middle Ages; and Travel in the Seventeenth Century (McGill University, 1926, pp. 166–167). Such lectures were often organized in collaboration with local organizations. For example, in 1926–27, the following organizations hosted public lectures by McGill faculty members: Montreal Mechanics' Institute, Shawinigan Technical Institute, Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire, Valleyfield Mutual Improvement Society, Magog High School, Three Rivers Literary Society, Vankleek Hill Public Library Board, Pointe Claire Presbyterian Church, and Lachine High School.

Although it was a much younger institution than McGill, UBC established its University Extension Committee in 1918, two years earlier than its Montreal counterpart.

In a report to the chancellor and members of the board of governors in June 1919, the following rationale was expressed:

This Committee of the Faculty was formed to keep before the public, especially in the out lying parts of the Province, the work of the University. The Committee has planned to do this by issuing publications from time to time, [and] by sending out lecturers at intervals to the larger towns and cities of the Province. (University of British Columbia [UBC], 1919, p. 1)

While the dissemination of publications may have continued as part of the mandate of this committee, such dissemination became secondary to the organization and delivery of public lectures. The number of extension lectures reportedly given by UBC faculty members increased from 24 in 1918–19, to 92 in 1920–21, and to 135 in 1922–23. The number of attendees at these extension lectures became substantial by the mid-1920s, as Table 1 indicates.

Table 1: UBC Extension Lectures: Number and Estimated Attendance

Year	Number of lectures	Aggregate attendance
1923–24	174	19,382
1924–25	186	22,035
1925–26	162	15,454
1926–27	209	16,148

Extension lectures were a significant form of contact between faculty members and people external to the university campus. A majority of lectures were given in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia in places such as Vancouver and New Westminster. However, numerous lectures were given in locations more distant from UBC, including cities such as Victoria, Kelowna, Kamloops, and Seattle, as well as smaller towns on Vancouver Island and in the Fraser Valley and the Okanagan Valley. Lecturers were drawn from all academic departments, and the subjects of the lectures reflected the breadth of scholarship in those departments. Table 2 exemplifies the scope of these extension lectures by presenting selected titles from the lectures offered in 1920–21.

Table 2: Selected Lectures Offered by UBC University Extension Committee, 1920–21

Department	Titles of selected lectures
Classics	The Spirit of Greek Comedy
English	Rudyard Kipling
Library	The Place of the Library in the Community
Modern Languages	Balzac: the Man
History	Clemenceau and the France of his Time
Philosophy	Philosophy and Life
Economics	The Tariff in Canadian History
Biology	Forest Trees of British Columbia
Zoology	Food from the Sea
Mathematics	The Myths of the Constellations
Physics	Modern Problems in Fuel Utilization
Chemistry	Gases of the Atmosphere
Public Health	Spread and Control of Infectious Diseases
Civil Engineering	Road Building
Mechanical Engineering	Popular Mechanics
Mining and Metallurgy	Petroleum: Its Origin and Products
Geology	Gems and Precious Stones
Animal Husbandry	Farm Survey
Horticulture	Small Fruits for Small Gardens
Poultry Husbandry	Factors Influencing Egg Production
Dairying	Milk and the Public

In the delivery of extension lectures, the University Extension Committee worked with a wide range of community-based organizations. Each autumn, the committee distributed letters to various organizations informing them of the lectures offered by UBC faculty members and indicating the procedures necessary to arrange for lectures. Local organizations were responsible for arranging a facility for the lecture and advertising the event. The University Extension Committee paid the lecturers' travel expenses and the lecturers provided their services without charge as part of their employment as UBC faculty members. Dates, lecturers, and topics were finalized by the committee based on requests from local organizations and the availability of lecturers. Extension lectures were sometimes stand-alone events and sometimes provided as part of a series of related lectures, or as part of a tour by a particular lecturer. As a general rule, no admission fee was to be charged for extension lectures.

Clearly, by the early 1920s, both McGill and UBC were engaged in delivering extension lectures to people other than their regular students. At McGill, such lectures were often organized into series that paralleled undergraduate courses. At UBC, more such lectures were given but they were not typically organized into courses of instruction. The notion that the university would provide any other form of educational program or service to adult members of the community was not expressed in any official documents from the universities at the time. However, by the mid-1930s, both McGill and UBC had discovered a much broader terrain of adult education and declared themselves to be committed to acting in that terrain.

Discovering Adult Education

McGill established a Department of Extra-Mural Relations in 1928 and gave it three basic duties: publicity, external relations, and adult education. In the first annual report of the department, Director Wilfred Bovey wrote that "adult education is the most important province with which the Department of Extra-Mural Relations has to deal" (McGill University, 1928, p. 70). Bovey introduced adult education to his readers through a definition that encompassed three categories of activity, the nature of which varied according to its relationship to vocational preparation. He wrote:

It is almost impossible to give a satisfactory definition of adult education, it covers so large an area. At one end we find the field of work originally tilled by the Workers Educational Associations. A man or woman who has finished school desires to extend his or her knowledge of some subject such as classical literature, painting, or poetry. There is no utilitarian object, the student is not aiming at any material return. But though these studies are of no material value, it would not be right to say that they are of no value, for they add to one's capacity to enjoy life and so doubtless to one's general efficiency. That this education is worthy of the name cannot be disputed, for it is the function of education to teach us how to employ not only our business hours, but our leisure. This type of work has no recognized definitive name—for the moment let us call it non-vocational. (McGill University, 1928, p. 70)

Bovey contrasted such non-vocational forms of adult education with "semi-vocational work," which he described as having "a utilitarian object as well as the object of enjoyment" (McGill University, 1928, p. 71). He cited courses for amateur social workers and leisure-time handicraft producers as examples of adult educational activity that had economic value for the community as well as enjoyment for the individual. He identified "study of a definitely vocational nature" (p. 70) as a form of adult education that prepared people for their careers. Bovey distinguished adult education from university studies based on the notions that adult education was for people who could not attend university, and that universities could not accommodate all the subject matters of interest to adults (McGill University, 1928).

After defining adult education, Bovey described the reasons for McGill's interest in becoming active in the field:

We at McGill University take the position that if we are to maintain the maximum efficiency and the high place among the universities of the world which we have obtained, we must insist on study leading to a McGill degree being done at the University itself. It is hardly necessary to go into all the reasons for this, perhaps they are self-evident. Attendance at the University involves a great many other things as well as study and our conception of a University degree is that it implies such attendance.

But if McGill has thus limited the number of those upon whom she can set the seal of a degree, we are none the less determined to serve every section of the community. It is for this reason that we have entered the wide province of Adult Education. We are anxious that our libraries and our laboratories shall be used as much as possible, provided that they are used properly. We are anxious that our teachers shall do their utmost to extend their sphere beyond our own walls. (McGill University, 1928, p. 72)

Bovey concluded his report with the claim that the Department of Extra-Mural Relations was established as a “channel of communication between outside groups anxious to organize themselves for educational purposes, and the University desirous on its side of broadening its scope” (McGill University, 1928, p. 72). In short, McGill had discovered adult education and established a department to lead its involvement in the field.

At UBC, adult education was discovered after McGill had been active in the field for some years. On November 16, 1935, UBC President Klinck delivered *A Plan for Adult Education in British Columbia* in an address to the Vancouver Institute. Klinck began his speech by asserting that the field of adult education had recently become very significant in North America. He wrote:

Our first task in approaching this subject is that of delimiting the field. Who are adults and what is Adult Education? Next we might fittingly inquire, do adults wish to learn, and are they capable of learning? If so, what do they wish to learn, and what are the most generally accepted methods of enabling them to do so? (Klinck, 1935, p. 1)

The first part of Klinck’s address was a systematic response to these questions in terms that would be familiar to contemporary scholars and practitioners of adult education. An adult was defined as anyone over 16 years of age, and adult education was seen to be a voluntary and co-operative activity in which adults build upon what they already know through an intentional process of learning. Adults were described as perfectly capable of learning but not universally interested in education. Klinck (1935) argued:

Adult Education aims to make intellectual growth continuous. It seeks to broaden the base of educational interest acquired in formal schooling; to mobilize the experience gained in adult life; and to bring both to bear upon the problems of the present. It seeks to provide opportunities for the individual to make his own discoveries, to develop the latent resources within himself, and to fit him for more efficient and satisfying living. (pp. 4–5)

Klinck (1935) defined adult education as involving elements of personal growth, vocational preparation, and development of active and responsible citizens. He suggested that the ability to learn and to think creatively and critically was as important as the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. He outlined lectures, symposia, informal discussion groups, and panel discussions as four methods of effective adult education. He identified "new reasons for adult education," originating in a "widening gap between scientific progress and social progress" and the "steady rise in the average age of the population" (p. 12). Further, Klinck argued that it was "incontrovertible" that "in a complex society such as ours learning must be a continuous process throughout life" (p. 17). He asserted, "What is needed . . . is to evolve an educational system for the whole Province—for the whole of life—age as well as youth" (p. 18).

Klinck (1935) described the development of adult education in England, the United States, and Canada, and he summarized the debate regarding the suitability of adult education functions to the mission of universities. He concluded this debate as follows:

Whatever else may be said regarding the universities' off-campus service to adults, practically all the universities have accepted and are attempting to discharge the responsibility with all the effectiveness at their command, and they are unabashed and unapologetic in doing so. Moreover, instead of decreasing their contacts with their extra-mural constituents, they propose to increase them, and thus help provide enlarged opportunities for intellectual service to every class or group not served by other agencies. Whatever is the attitude of the University of British Columbia on this question, the fact remains that University Extension is alive and in active operation from one end of the Dominion to the other. (pp. 9–10)

To exemplify his claims regarding the growing importance and acceptability of adult education, Klinck (1935) described the extension work of St. Francis Xavier University and the University of Alberta, and the establishment of the Canadian Association for Adult Education.

Following this description of the field, Klinck described his plans for developing adult education at UBC. He acknowledged that adult education had previously constituted "a very minor part" of UBC policy, and outlined the work of the University Extension Committee. For the future, Klinck indicated that UBC would establish a Department of University Extension whose staff would "meet the majority of requests for extra-mural instruction" so that additional teaching loads would not be imposed upon the professorial staff whose first duty was "to the students who are registered in the regular courses" (p. 16). Klinck outlined the "Purpose of the New Organization" in the following terms:

The University has no desire to create a super-organization, or to impose itself upon any established effort. Rather, its chief purpose is to promote and strengthen whatever is already in the field. It is interested in supplying, not necessarily what it wishes the times demanded, but what is actually demanded. It is prepared to co-operate, to the limit of its resources, with any institution, public or private, scholastic or non-scholastic, which has

an educational program for adults, excepting those agencies which have as their purpose the propagation of doctrines. More particularly does it wish to give its support to those educational undertakings which are marked by consecutiveness and persistency of effort, rather than those which are sporadic and intermittent in character. (p. 16)

Klinck's *Plan for Adult Education in British Columbia* set an ambitious agenda for UBC and broadened the scope of the university's extension mandate far beyond the provision of off-campus lectures. To pursue this mandate, UBC established a Department of University Extension, which became operational in 1936.

Doing Adult Education

By the early 1930s, the McGill Department of Extra-Mural Relations was engaged in a very broad range of adult educational activities (McGill University, 1933, 1934). Extension courses, which mirrored undergraduate courses, continued as they had since the early 1920s, with somewhere between 15 and 20 courses per year being attended by somewhere between 250 and 400 students. Lyceum lectures also continued, with lectures given in several locations in Quebec as well as a few locations in Ontario and New Brunswick. At each location, a community-based organization co-operated with McGill to organize these lectures. In 1933–34, aggregate attendance at McGill Lyceum lectures was estimated at 6,500.

In addition to expanding these previously established forms of university extension, the Department of Extra-Mural Relations had, by the early 1930s, developed several new initiatives. Extra-mural courses were delivered on topics including French, German, popular psychology, public speaking, and folk dancing. Slide shows with accompanying lecture notes were circulated for presentation by various community organizations. In 1933–34, aggregate attendance at these “lantern slide” shows was estimated at 15,000. Radio lectures by McGill faculty members were broadcast regularly, and the director of extra-mural relations was a member of an educational planning committee of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. Adult educational programs were delivered in collaboration with organizations as diverse as the Montreal Mechanics' Institute, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and the Montreal Board of Trade. Dramatic plays were performed for groups of children. Lectures and a special lending library were organized for the “white collar unemployed.”

In addition to the extensive work of the Department of Extra-Mural Relations, several other units at McGill delivered adult educational programming in the early 1930s (Bovey, 1935). Macdonald College conducted agricultural and home economics extension work. Agricultural extension operated in conjunction with a provincial network of government agronomists, while home economics extension worked collaboratively with the Quebec Women's Institutes. English-speaking communities in rural Quebec and beyond were served by McGill's travelling libraries. Within Montreal, the McGill School of Commerce offered evening courses in accounting that prepared participants to write the examinations of various accountancy associations. Various McGill departments ran summer schools for audiences including teachers, librarians, museum curators, and people

wanting to learn French. The Department of English provided support to local dramatic groups throughout Quebec.

In short, in the early 1930s, McGill provided an extensive range of educational programs and services to adults in Montreal and beyond. The stature of McGill in the national adult education community was such that Wilfred Bovey was a leading figure in the establishment of the Canadian Association for Adult Education in 1935, and was elected as its president in 1939. However, within a few years, McGill had largely retreated from adult education, and its extension activities had reverted to those in existence prior to its 1928 discovery of adult education. The Department of Extra-Mural Relations was closed in 1935, with some of its responsibilities transferred to a new Committee on Extension Courses and University Lectures. References to extension or adult education in the annual reports of the institution became very scarce after 1937–38, in which year McGill stated bluntly: "The University does not find it possible to extend widely into the field of adult education" (McGill University, 1938, p. 14). Indeed, in the 1940s and 1950s the only consistent reference to adult education in the McGill annual reports was in small statistical tables giving the number of students registered in things such as extension courses, evening courses in accountancy, and various summer schools.

Like McGill, UBC followed its discovery of adult education with an ambitious and wide-ranging series of activities. The Department of University Extension moved quickly to expand upon the existing extension lecture series and embark upon several new adult educational initiatives. Annual reports submitted by Gordon Shrum (director of university extension from 1937 to 1953) and John Friesen (director of university extension from 1953 to 1966) reveal a remarkable range and scope of activity within a few years. In the 1940s, UBC faculty members delivered an average of over 440 extension lectures each year to an average of over 46,000 people. The Department of University Extension also reached mass audiences through circulating movies and slide shows to communities. In the 1940s, an average of over 2,000 slide shows and over 10,000 movies were shown each year through circuits organized by UBC. Aggregate attendance at such showings likely exceeded half a million people each year—although many attendees viewed more than one movie or slide show. Radio broadcasts also provided education and entertainment to large numbers of adults. Further, through travelling library systems and the co-operation of local community groups, UBC loaned large numbers of books, dramatic plays, and phonograph records across British Columbia. In the 1940s, the circulation of books, plays, and records averaged, on an annual basis, over 5,700, 4,600, and 3,300 respectively. Through lectures, slide shows, motion pictures, and circulation of resources, the Department of University Extension provided educational services to large numbers of adults.

In addition to initiatives reaching large audiences, UBC engaged in forms of adult education that endeavoured to have a more intensive impact on smaller numbers of participants. The Department of University Extension delivered non-credit evening classes, typically in Vancouver but sometimes elsewhere in the Lower Mainland or Fraser Valley. The number of such courses increased throughout the 1940s, but over the decade the average number of evening classes delivered was 25 and the average number of students in such classes was over 1,200 per year. Topics ranged from those of a general interest (e.g., amateur gardening, conversational French, and music appreciation) to those of interest to

business people (e.g., marketing, industrial management, and business English) and those related to specific vocational pursuits (e.g., poultry husbandry, electronics, and elementary journalism). UBC also delivered vocational education through the Educational Program for British Columbia Fishermen, the Agricultural Extension Program, and the Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program. Further, conferences, short courses, and summer institutes were organized on the UBC campus on a wide range of topics, from social work and parenting to fine arts and personnel administration.

In addition to these various instructor-led educational events, the Department of University Extension organized an ambitious set of citizenship or public affairs programs through an innovative study group format. In such programs, small groups of adults would gather regularly to discuss specific issues. Such groups were led by local members themselves, but they were provided with some level of facilitation and educational resources from UBC. In the main study group program, the Department of University Extension provided local groups with course outlines and reading packages as well as suggestions and guidelines for leading the groups. Topics included issues as diverse as child psychology, art appreciation, public speaking, and the co-operative movement. As an important variant of the study group format, the UBC Department of University Extension facilitated British Columbians' participation in the National Farm Radio Forum and the Citizen's Forum. In the 1940s, UBC facilitated an average of more than 250 local study groups each year and organized an average of about 60 local groups in each of the two radio forum programs.

In short, within a few years of its establishment, the UBC Department of University Extension was delivering an extensive program of vocational, cultural, and citizenship education to large numbers of adults in the Vancouver area and beyond. Through the 1940s and 1950s, UBC sustained a very broad range and extensive scope of adult educational programming. In the 1960s, UBC reduced the range of its activity in adult education in a manner succinctly identified in the Department of University Extension's annual report for 1963-64:

In the year under review in this Report the Extension Department's programme has been strongly influenced by two major policy changes in the University. The creation of new universities in the province and the increased emphasis at the University of British Columbia on graduate work and professional training have accelerated the trend within the Extension programme to focus to a greater extent on professional and liberal education courses for the university graduate. In addition, the decision by the Board of Governors that the Extension programme must become substantially more self-supporting has made necessary both a revision of the Department's fee structure and the elimination or curtailment of some important aspects of the programme. (UBC, 1964, p. 2)

By 1970, UBC had closed the Department of University Extension and created the Centre for Continuing Education.

Understanding the Discovery of Adult Education

Why did McGill and UBC discover adult education at about the same time? One might argue that this discovery reflected the rational progress of human enlightenment or the growing maturity of the field of adult education. However, while the vocabulary of adult education may have been novel in the 1920s and 1930s, universities in the United States, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta had been engaged in adult education for some years prior to its discovery by McGill and UBC. One might argue that this discovery reflected changing social and economic conditions in Montreal and Vancouver. However, the UBC Department of Extension was created at about the same time that the McGill Department of Extra-Mural Relations was closed, indicating that the Great Depression had differential impacts on the adult education work of these two universities.

While intellectual progress and social change cannot be ruled out as factors in the emergence of adult education at McGill and UBC, more direct causes were at work. At UBC, there is convincing evidence that the discovery and adoption of adult education in the 1930s were driven by an instrumental concern with public relations and the availability of external funding. In the fall of 1933, the Carnegie Corporation of New York granted \$50,000 to each of the four provincial universities in Western Canada. At UBC, 60% of these funds were eventually dedicated to "the organization and establishment of Adult Education on an experimental basis" (Klinck, 1935, p. 14). The dedication of this significant external grant to the establishment of a Department of University Extension reflected both an interest in the provision of adult education services to the people of British Columbia and a concern with the position of the university in the provincial community. The economic depression of the 1930s had a substantial impact on UBC. Amidst public suggestions that the university be closed, the provincial government reduced the UBC budget from \$626,000 to \$250,000 in 1932 (UBC, n.d.).

In January 1934, in response to the opportunity presented by the Carnegie Corporation grant, A. F. Barss submitted *A Proposal to Improve the Relation of the University to the Province* (Barss, 1934a). Barss described the "Present Situation" in the following terms:

This University is suffering severely from lack of contact with its constituency—the people of this Province. The present condition of relative isolation is having a serious effect on the University as a whole, as well as upon its faculties and the individual staff members. The blame for the shrinkage in the number of students, for the criticisms of the public, for the indifference or hostility of the Press, cannot all be placed on the present depression, but rather may in large measure be credited to the enforced lack of touch with the "outside". (p. 1)

Barss's (1934a) "Proposed Remedy" involved "the establishment of a definite organization under capable leadership which would have the responsibility of developing and maintaining an active public relations (or University extension) service" (p. 1). Following a brief description of the potential activities of this new service, Barss concluded his proposal with the following observations:

The above proposal has the merit of meeting very largely the conditions indicated in the letter from the Carnegie Corporation. If put into operation it would tend to make the scope of the University provincial in fact as well as in name. It would be a type of work which could be started at once, modified as desired and stopped when necessary, but with the beneficial effects continuing for some time. Finally, it might very easily be the means of inspiring greater appreciation of, interest in and support for the University and its work. (p. 2)

Barss's initial proposal must have been favourably received by UBC administrators, because in March 1934 he wrote a more detailed document: *A Proposal to Improve the Relation of the University to the Province by the establishment of A University Extension Service*. He (1934b) argued:

It is well within the power of the University itself to modify in large measure the present situation and to provide a satisfactory remedy through the creation of a University Extension Service, as being the most effective means of improving the relation of the University to the Province. The Carnegie Corporation Grant would appear to provide the necessary means whereby an immediate start could be made to correct the present unsatisfactory condition. (p. 1)

In this proposal, Barss outlined the financial parameters within which the Carnegie Grant could provide an initial budget for an extension service. Further, he provided a list of potential activities “whereby the University might be taken to the people of the Province, or the people of the Province brought to the University”: (1) maintaining a regular news service; (2) distributing bulletins, circulars, and pamphlets; (3) broadcasting a university radio program; (4) providing lectures to community-based organizations; (5) hosting conferences on topics of special interest; (6) sponsoring annual meetings of various organizations; (7) holding “University Open House” and inspection tours; (8) undertaking field work with service clubs, high schools, and parent-teacher organizations; (9) maintaining a library loan service; and (10) undertaking adult education “as finances and conditions might warrant” (Barss, 1934b, pp. 3–4). Barss’s list of adult educational activities included evening classes, reading courses, short courses, off-campus extension schools, refresher courses for teachers and technical workers, liberal arts classes, and “unemployed camp schools.” Barss (1934b) concluded his proposal with the following summation:

To recapitulate—if, as seems true, the University is suffering from lack of contact with its constituency, the people of this Province, the surest and most immediate remedy for such a situation would appear to require that the University and the Province be brought into touch with each other in as many ways and on as many occasions as possible. In the proposals as outlined, a number of means have been suggested whereby a “University Extension Service” could assist in bringing the University actively before the people of the Province, as well as enlarging the influence and usefulness of the University throughout the Province. (p. 5)

Barss's proposals were influential in President Klinck's (1935) discovery of adult education, and in guiding the establishment of the Department of University Extension.

At McGill, there is no direct archival evidence linking the discovery of adult education with instrumental concerns regarding funding opportunities or public relations. However, McGill did receive funding from the Carnegie Corporation for its adult education activities. Indeed, Wilfred Bovey indicated, in the minutes of the McGill Committee on Extension Courses and University Lectures for May 27, 1935, and November 13, 1936, that funding support from the Carnegie Corporation was central to the formation of the Canadian Association for Adult Education (McGill University, 1935, 1936). Further, McGill's comparative lack of involvement in the broader forms of adult education that thrived at UBC in the 1940s and 1950s was justified, by leaders of the institution, by virtue of the fact that McGill received very little financial support from the provincial government so could not engage in extension activities that were not financially self-sustaining.

Conclusions

McGill and UBC shared a similar pattern of engagement with adult education. They started by having university faculty members deliver lectures in the evening to people who were not enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students. Between 1928 and 1935, they discovered the broader domain of adult education and established institutional units that subsequently organized an ambitious range of adult educational activities beyond traditional extension lectures. Some years later—more quickly and more decisively for McGill than for UBC—they closed these units and retreated to forms of adult education that once again mirrored more closely the provision of undergraduate education.

This article has told an important story for those interested in the history of adult education in Canada. This story has implications beyond what took place in Montreal and Vancouver in the 1920s and 1930s. It shows that history is not linear—that institutional priorities and activities come and go. It shows that universities can be very significant actors in the broad field of adult education. It shows that within comparable political-economic contexts, different universities make different decisions about how, and how extensively, to engage in adult education. Perhaps most importantly, it shows that universities engage in adult education when their leaders perceive that doing so will have instrumental or strategic benefits for the institution. For scholars, practitioners, and advocates of adult education, this presents the challenge of how to create, in the contemporary environment, conditions whereby engagement with the education of adults will be perceived as advantageous to universities.

There is an underlying political aspect to these conclusions. As I have argued elsewhere (McLean, 2007c) on the basis of work by sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu, universities have a role in the reproduction of inequality in society. Universities are key institutions in educational systems that enable people with privileges to pass on those privileges to their children in a manner that seems fair to everyone. Empirically, the levels of education and income of one's parents are strong predictors of whether or not one will graduate from university. Further, university education is a strong predictor of one's subsequent income and wealth. Admission to university is typically a meritocratic

competition based on objective indicators such as high school grades and entrance examination results. As such, all people would seem to have an equal opportunity to obtain a university education and enjoy the benefits of that education, as long as they are willing to work hard enough to merit admission. In reality, children of relatively privileged parents have a higher likelihood of doing well in high school, and thus gaining admission to university, than do children with less privileged backgrounds. As such, universities are, perhaps unintentionally, institutions that reinforce and give legitimacy to social and economic inequalities.

While the predominant impact of universities thus seems to be a conservative one, there are many individuals and units at Canadian universities engaged in research, teaching, and service practices that explicitly contest the status quo. Engagement with the education of adults in manners outside the degree-credit curriculum is an important opportunity for such individuals and units to have an impact that challenges rather than supports inequitable patterns of social relations. Here, it is important to distinguish between educational programming that serves adults who were unable to access university education and credentials as youth, and educational programming that provides additional opportunities for the already well-educated to further build their expertise and credentials. The current popularity of university-community engagement discourse, and the emergence of various institutional units responsible for fostering university-community relations, may promote new opportunities for those interested in developing forms of adult education that can thrive at Canadian universities, yet challenge the conservative political tendencies of those universities.

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